

Vehicle Noise Region Issue

By FRED OTT
Times Staff Writer

HAMMOND — "Noise toy", the souped-up hot rods, vans and motorcycles that roar through the streets of some metropolitan areas, are something of a Region problem, too.

The Environmental Protection Agency says that hot rodders top the list of noise pollution complaints nationwide. But for Ronald Novak, Hammond's air pollution chief, all vehicles create the city's No. 1 noise problem.

And Hammond is trying to do something about it. It is one of 50 midwest communities cooperating with the EPA in a noise control program. Hammond is also working on the program with the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns.

For about a year the city has been using a decibel monitoring device borrowed from the EPA through the association, and it has proved a success, Novak says.

The city also has a model noise control ordinance, so good that it is serving as a model for other communities in the state.

Brad Garton, noise coordinator for the association, says, "Hammond has probably the most comprehensive noise control ordinance in the state. We are going to incorporate parts of it into our own pilot ordinance."

Garton believes, however, that the Region's major noise comes from stationery things, varying from go-cart tracks to barking dogs.

Where vehicle noise is troublesome, the association, aided by the EPA, has developed a program for using decibel meters mounted on police cars to monitor noise levels of passing traffic.

The device is used in Hammond when manpower permits. Vacations and other absences prevent its use as regularly as would be desirable.

"The unit is good," Police Lt. Bernard Stribjack say. "It works. We've made numerous arrests with it."

Hammond also has signs posted at

major entrances to the city showing the word "noise" with a slash through it.

"But a sign is just a sign," Stribjack says. "You have to enforce it."

Crown Point has borrowed the device but only to run tests on a go-cart track that never opened.

Crown Point Councilman-at-Large James Forsythe agrees with Garton that vehicles are not the major source of noise, at least not in his city. Barking dogs and loud parties were more prevalent and noisier, he says.

To help combat the racket, Forsythe is drafting a noise control ordinance which he wants to be as comprehensive as Hammond's.

Barking dogs and raucous gatherings rank behind vehicles as top noisemakers in Calumet City. The noise they generate is so serious that "We are going to go along with the EPA on this thing," says Capt. John Sullivan.

Calumet City police put a decibel monitoring device into use this month.

Other Region law enforcement agencies do not regard "noise toys" as a major headache.

"It doesn't even rank as a minor problem," says Lansing Police Capt. Robert Wheaton.

All communities have hot rods, he observes, but that it's not something Lansing police cannot easily handle.

Dolton Police Sgt. Richard Hall agrees.

"We get some calls about loud cars," he says. "But I don't feel it's something that needs special action."

South Holland has some areas where there is new construction, and dirt bikers use the roads there.

"I wouldn't say we have a real problem," Sgt. James Santeforte says.

In South Holland, according to Santeforte, railroads are the worst noise polluters. Trains have been monitored with noise devices but police they have never had to use it on street traffic, he says.

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